

TODAY'S CHALLENGE: EDUCATION
IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. BACA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, the challenge confronting us today is education. Before us is the future of education. We as a Nation must place education as the number one priority if we are to meet the challenges and needs of the 21st century; if we are to look where our children are going to be and if they are well prepared to meet those challenges.

We need to invest in education. We need to come together in a bipartisan effort and support H.R. 4094; 228 Members are cosponsors. This is not a partisan issue. This is a bipartisan issue. This is about education and putting a high priority and investing in the future of America.

We need to make sure that class size reduction for our children is there. We have got to make sure that our children have the same opportunity that many other individuals have where they have small classes, but it can only happen through modernization and class size reduction.

We need to fund education at the highest level. When a child comes into school, they must feel comfortable to know that the ratio is 25 to one, student to teacher. If the atmosphere is good, the students feel good, the teachers feel good. They are in an atmosphere that they can learn. That is positive for a lot of our students. The individual attention is important to a student, because a student has to develop self-esteem, self-confidence in themselves. If he or she has confidence in himself and they know that the teacher is working in areas that they need, then we can have the accountability to make sure that our students are progressing and learning in our public institutions. It can only happen if we reduce the class sizes.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we need teacher training; and, yes, we do need accountability. That is very important for us as well. But we must invest in education; we must allow that to happen. We must provide the tools and the instruments to make sure that our teachers have the resources and the funding. I know that it is very difficult in today's society. When we look at California alone, that has over 6 million students in our K through 12. More and more students are coming in, and yet we have a ratio of 45 to one in many of our schools. We need to make sure that we look across the Nation and we provide the funding.

My son, Joseph Baca, Jr., is a teacher in junior high, and he is going out and buying supplies. This should not happen to him and many other teachers because we are not providing the funds that are very much needed in our classrooms. We need to make sure that we provide not only the funding to make sure that teachers have the equipment,

have the supplies, and create the atmosphere; we want to make sure that when children go into our schools, that they know very well that they are coming into a school that they do not have to worry about leaking roofs. They do not have to worry about not having any faucets that are fixed, and they do not have to worry about looking at windows that are broken. They do not have to look at walls that have graffiti. We want to create an atmosphere that is good for them.

If an atmosphere is good for them, then they will begin to learn. And if it is good for them, then teachers feel good about being energized in teaching.

At the same time, we have to make sure that we look at not only modernization, but the digital divide, to look at technology to make sure that we fund every one of our schools so that our children are well prepared to meet the 21st century and well prepared and well trained. If they are not, what is going to happen to our Nation? What is going to happen to our Nation? It is our responsibility that we provide the funding at a higher level. We have got to invest more. We are not investing enough in education.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the answer and the beginning and the right steps are in H.R. 4094. That is a step in the right direction. When an individual receives the funding, then that means we have the accountability. At the same time, when we look at where are our students, we must prepare them to meet the 21st century so they are ready to go to a community college and State college and our universities.

Are community colleges ready for them? We have to make sure that we provide tax incentives and tax rates and tuition that is available for our students to go on to our community colleges. More and more students are going to our community colleges right now, and we have to make sure that we provide the funding there. And as we look at those students who are transferring on to 4-year institutions, to make sure that they can get into a State college or university.

Mr. Speaker, I know that we have honors programs and other programs, but it becomes difficult when we do not have the funding and we do not have the financing that are available for a lot of our students. The tax incentives and tax breaks are there. Mr. Speaker, we need to invest more in education. We can take the right steps. The steps are ahead of us, but we have to come together in a bipartisan effort.

TRIBUTE TO CONGRESSMAN RON PACKARD UPON HIS RETIREMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, the leader of our California delegation, the

gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS), has given me the honor of putting together a night to honor the gentleman from California (Mr. PACKARD), one of our colleagues who is leaving the House, retiring at the end of this session.

We wanted to take a little time to talk a little bit of his accomplishments while here in the Congress. First of all, we will hear from our leader, the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS). I yield to him such time as he desires.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate my colleague yielding. And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to join my colleagues this evening in paying tribute to our friend from the Committee on Appropriations, RON PACKARD. RON is retiring from the House after 18 years of service to his constituents. He has had the privilege of representing one of the most beautiful parts of our State in south Orange County and north San Diego County, a small piece of Riverside County as well, as he would remind us.

It is understandable why RON would want to spend more time at home. He has just completed the building of a new home with his wife, Jean, seven children and too many grandchildren to count. He has got plenty to look forward to as he goes back home to his district.

RON came to the Congress after serving in the U.S. Navy and later as a member of the school board, active in the chamber of commerce. He served on the city council and was mayor of Carlsbad. RON was elected to Congress as a result of his success as a write-in candidate in 1982, one of the very few occasions in which a write-in candidate has been successful.

I have worked most closely with RON in the appropriations process where over the years he has been the chairman of the Subcommittee on Legislative Appropriations, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Construction Appropriations, and is just completing a tour representing our State very well on the subcommittee that deals with energy and water appropriations, a most important appropriations bill.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to miss RON greatly as a member of our committee. He has been of great service to Southern California.

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I yield now to the gentleman from Long Beach, California (Mr. HORN).

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, RON PACKARD is truly a man of the House of Representatives. He is a gentleman. He is civility. He is a good listener, and he has got a ready smile. He won friends all over this Chamber on both sides of the aisle; and, of course, that is what effective legislators do.

Of course, when we all learned that he had a total of 44 children and grandchildren, 7 children, 34 grandchildren, and three great grandchildren, we were envious. And I always wondered how he